



CITY OF HOUSTON

Sylvester Turner

Mayor

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March 7, 2019

The Honorable Four Price
Texas House of Representatives
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, Texas 78768-2910

Dear Chairman Price,

Recent events have cast a painful spotlight onto the issue of mental health in our public schools. It has become apparent that we need to do more as a society to address the mental and behavioral needs of our children. The statistics tell quite a story. According to Mental Health America of Greater Houston, one out of every five of our youth aged 13-18 has a mental health condition. One out of every ten has a behavior or conduct disorder. Another 11% has a mood disorder, such as depression. *Nearly one of every eight Texas high school students attempted suicide in 2017.*

The shooting at Santa Fe High School was a wakeup call. We have neglected the mental health needs of our children for too long. A catastrophic event like Hurricane Harvey may seem separate and apart, but it only makes the need more widespread, and more apparent. We must make access to mental health care a routine part of the school experience.

I wholeheartedly support House Bill 1335 and rider. HB 1335 will help improve access to mental and behavioral health care on school campuses. The bill incentivizes providers to partner with schools to co-locate services and invest in school-based behavioral health services. Normalizing mental and behavioral health care access will help destigmatize mental health issues and their treatment.

HB 1335 will provide dedicated funding for behavioral health professionals in schools. The bill incentivizes providers to partner with schools to co-locate services in or near schools. These centers will provide access to mental health services to both students and their families. The medically underserved students will likely improve their academic performance as well, paying societal dividends well beyond just the immediate emotional wellbeing of our children.

The emotional wellbeing of our children should be reason enough. We need to treat mental health like we treat cancer — with early intervention. HB 1335 is a strong step in that direction.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sylvester Turner", is written over the word "Sincerely,".

Sylvester Turner
Mayor